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LOVE AND REFRIGERATION

By Steve Harbor

JENNY Adams was pouring over her assignment for tomorrow's Literature class at the State University, when the back door buzzer sounded.

It was a tall young man in working clothes, and he carried a metal tool box.

"A-Plus Refrigerator Repair Service," he announced.

His voice was a nice baritone, and he had clear gray smiling eyes.

"Oh, of course," Jenny stepped aside to let him in.

"What seems to be the trouble?"

"It keeps running day and night. Never stops," Jenny said.

He opened the refrigerator door and clicked his tongue sadly. "Never, never put bananas in the refrigerator," he quipped. "By the way, my name is James Bradford. You may call me Jim."

"Mr. Bradford," Jenny said, her voice as frigid as an ice cube, "you are here to fix that thing there."

He leaned on the open refrigerator door, grinned, then looked directly into her eyes.

There was something disturbing about that look. Jenny could feel herself blushing. She found herself wishing her mother were home.

"It's the thermostat," the young man said after some tinkering. "I'll have to replace it."

Jenny watched him work. She noticed that his dark hair had a natural wave.

"There," he said finally. "That ought to do it. Are you doing anything special tonight?"

Jenny held her head up high. "That's no concern of yours," she said coldly.

Shrugging his shoulders, he picked up his tool box. He stopped at the door. "Say, you're not married, or engaged?"

Jenny fought the impulse to return his smile. "Good-by," she said with finality. "Please mail us your bill."

She returned to Mrs. Browning's sonnets, but somehow she couldn't concentrate on them. A pair of gray eyes and a heartwarming grin seemed to get in the way.

"The repair man put a new thermostat into the refrigerator," she told her mother when she returned from shopping.

"That's nice," Mrs. Adams said. "Now let's hope we'll have no more trouble."

Her hope was short lived. Two hours later they discovered that the refrigerator had stopped altogether.

Jenny dialed the A-Plus Refrigerator Repair Service and prepared to be indignant.

"I'd like to speak to Jim—I mean, Mr. Bradford," she began.

"He isn't here right now," a strange voice said. "I'm Henderson, the owner. Is there something I can do for you?"

"There certainly is," Jenny declared. "This is Jenny Adams. You can tell Mr. Bradford that our refrigerator doesn't work at all, now that he's fixed it!"

"That's odd," Mr. Henderson said. "He's the best man I've got in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning. But, we guarantee our work. I'll send him back to your place as soon as he comes in."

Mrs. Adams was out at the drug store when Jim Bradford returned.

"I'm back," he announced.

"I hope you'll be more successful this time," Jenny said primly, turning away from his smile.

"So do I." He went to the refrigerator and began working. "Are you?" he asked. "Married, that is. Or maybe engaged?"

"Aren't you being a bit fresh?" Jenny said.

He closed the refrigerator door. "Actually, I am usually a very quiet and reserved guy," he said. "I can't imagine what's gotten into me today." He grinned. "Do you suppose it could be love at first sight?"

Jenny's heart skipped a beat, but she ignored the last remark. "What—what was the matter with the refrigerator?" she asked.

His gray eyes met her dark ones for a long moment. "Nothing. I just didn't finish the job when I was here before. I thought maybe if you got to know me better...." He picked up his tool box. "I have two tickets for the ice show tonight. Could I pick you up at about seven?"

"I'm not interested," Jenny said flippantly.

"O.K." His face was suddenly serious. "If you feel that way, you won't have any more trouble. Not with the refrigerator, or with me." And with that he was gone.

Jenny watched him get into his truck, and then, for no reason at all, began to cry.

She was wiping away the tears when she heard her mother at the front door. The sound triggered Jenny into action. She dashed to the refrigerator and pulled out the plug.

"The repair man was here again," she said innocently when her mother entered the kitchen.

"But the refrigerator still isn't working?" Her mother looked at Jenny with a suspicious twinkle in her eyes.

"It seems that way," Jenny said, picking up the phone. "But this time I'll make sure that Mr. Bradford doesn't get away until—until everything is satisfactory."

She hummed a tune as she began dialing. And she wondered what she should wear to the ice show.